

## RELIGION AND SOCIAL POLICY

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before the Council. A creditor who has been similarly<sup>11</sup> hard and unconscionable " is committed to the Fleet. The justices of Norfolk are instructed to put pressure on a money-lender who has taken " very unjust and immoderate advantage by way of usury." The bishop of Exeter is urged to induce a usurer in his diocese to show " a more Christian and charitable consideration of these his neighbours." A nobleman has released two offenders imprisoned by the High Commission for the Province of York for having " taken usury contrary to the laws of God and of the realm/" and is ordered at once to recommit them. No Government can face with equanimity a state of things in which large numbers of respectable tradesmen may be plunged into bankruptcy. In times of unusual depression, the Council's intervention to prevent creditors from pressing their claims to the hilt was so frequent as to create the impression of something like an informal moratorium.\*<sup>1</sup>

The Governments of the Tudors and, still more, of the first two Stuarts, were masters of the art of disguising commonplace, and sometimes sordid, motives beneath a glittering facade of imposing principles. In spite of its lofty declarations of a disinterested solicitude for the public welfare, the social policy of the monarchy not only was as slipshod in execution as it

was grandiose  
in design, but was not seldom perverted into  
measures  
disastrous to its ostensible ends, both by  
the sinister  
pressure of sectional interests, and by the  
insistent  
necessities of an empty exchequer. Its  
fundamental  
conception, however—the philosophy of the  
thinkers  
and of the few statesmen who rose above  
immediate  
exigencies to consider the significance of  
the system  
in its totality—had a natural affinity with the  
doctrines  
which commended themselves to men of  
religion. It  
was of an ordered and graded society, in  
which each  
class performed its allotted function, and  
was secured  
such a livelihood, and no more than such a  
livelihood,  
as was proportioned to its status, " God  
and the